FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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Prayer, Meditation, and Mystery

In a recent book on the spiritual life, Henry Nouwen, the greatly gifted author of *Genesee Diary* and *The Way of the Heart*, describes a visit with a former student. The two men sat in Nouwen's room and talked for awhile. Little by little, a sense of oneness, of deep communion, came over them. Soon they had no more need of words. They fell silent and for a long time simply "were" together, quietly, spirit to spirit in the contemplative silence surrounding them and grounding them, deepening their relationship to each other and to life. When it came time to part, the student said softly to Nouwen, "from now on, all space between us will be holy ground."

Today, in our spiritually awakened era, this is not an unusual experience, but it is a mysterious experience. An element of *vast* mystery gives this teacher's encounter with his student a transcendent, sacramental quality that has broad implications for all of us. The experience recalls Karl Rahner's remark that the distant God who "lives on our furthest horizon," also "dwells directly within as our innermost reality:" the God beyond is also in our midst. It reminds us, also, that the "God beyond" is also *active* in our midst, leading us to the heights of community, beauty, and love.

But this sublime meeting has much more to say to us. Let us take a second look at it.

Two men free of the usual human obsession with self-affirmation came close to one another in the Spirit, and time opened, somehow expanded, was touched by eternity, like clouds pierced by the sun. *Sunyata*, or *unio in Christo*, their experience took place at the core of being and is a mystery because it contains more hidden meaning and value and purposefulness than we can ever discover. More a gift than an accomplishment, this kind of relatedness says more about self-emptying than self-fulfillment, more about self-surrender than self-mastery, more about the religious ideal of other-centeredness than the emaciated me-ideal of the modern West. Most importantly, this experience of the Holy points unmistakably to the life of prayer in which it originated, grew roots, and was sustained.

The relationship between prayer, meditation, and mystery is this: for people who pray, the most average events of a typical day are filled with

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mystery. Clay turned into a bowl, a thank you note, a feeling of gratitude or forgiveness, a sacrifice, a birth, a happy death: such elemental events are symbols overflowing with religious meaning. For the contemplative consciousness shaped in prayer penetrates naturally into the "ultimates and universals" in personal experience. The more we advance in prayer, the more we open ourselves to a larger than personal reality. The more we open to the incomprehensible mystery in each person, place, and situation, the more clearly we see that there is more to everything than we can ever understand.

C. G. Jung often advised his patients to ask after a dream, "What is the purpose of this dream?" Raising the same question after *any* human experience allows a potentially empty occurrence to be fulfilled with spiritual meaning. "What is the purpose of this depression?" "Of this failed friendship?" "Of this loss?" What is this experience trying to teach me? In the responses to these questions lies the material of personal transformation. The path is not painless or easy, but it leads to the pearl of great price. One must remember that a dark night led John of the Cross to God, that Madame Curie had to dig through a mountain of hard earth before she found life-giving radium.

The theologian George Hendry once wrote that a mystery in the religious sense is not something impossible to understand. It is something that overwhelms our understanding with "superabundant" wealth. A neighbor unexpectedly recovers from a fatal illness. A childless couple adopts and then conceives. These puzzles ask us to suspend our scientific and psychological judgments and enter into the ambiguity, to penetrate into the meaning of the incident, to become involved in it, to become a participant in the dark silence of the truth. In this act of involvement, by which we interpret a mystery without reducing or spoiling it, something of the undiscovered Spirit is discovered, something unrevealed is revealed.

In this edition of "Fellowship In Prayer," "Miracle on the Farm," by Charlotte Carpenter, describes the ultimate mystery that the life of prayer confronts: a miracle. Our lives are filled with such "sign-events." Life itself is a miracle mirroring God's depths. We sometimes lose the mysterious content, however, by trying to "explain away" the sacred, like a molecule under a microscope. It is crucial to judge a miracle by nothing but it's power to transform a life, to never interpret in a *physical* way what must be understood in a *spiritual* way, as the mystics have said throughout the centuries. ("Nowhere physically is everywhere spiritually," the Cloud Author wrote.) When we walk through the many rooms of a miracle undefended, with nothing but thought and feeling and intuition and faith, we find in abundance the promised store of inexhaustible meaning, value, and purposefulness.

The articles in this issue of "Fellowship In Prayer," invite you to prayer, meditation, and mystery. Paul Walsh discusses with Tenshin Reb Anderson a San Francisco Zen Center's work to foster Buddhist concentration, and Christopher Zimmer describes his fruitful discovery of conversational prayer. Ira Progoff shows how meditation miraculously transforms anxiety into meaning. Koldonga Sodnom writes from a Buddhist point of view about fidelity to family, while Father William Connolly, Rabbi Samuel Silver, and Mark Brody explore the therapeutic effects of prayer. A new feature is introduced with Reuben Musey's suggestion that our readers send us "Prayers to Share."

Perhaps, as your prayer life makes you more aware of the mysteries concealed and revealed in everyday events, you will notice that some of your relationships, like Nouwen and his student's, take place on holy ground.

MFG

A monk asked Master Joshu for the Way. "Why, just there behind the hedge," the Master pointed. "But, Master, I mean the Great Way," persisted the monk. "Oh, that way leads to the Capital," replied the Master.

In all that happens, my one desire and my one joy should be to know: "Here is the thing that God has willed for me."

Thomas Merton

One of the brethren questioned Isidore of Scete: why is it that the demons are so afraid of you? The elder replied: from the moment I became a monk I have striven to prevent anger from rising to my lips.

Master Mumon said, "The treasures of the house do not come in by the front door."

In returning and rest you will be saved,
In quietness and trust shall be your strength.

Is. 30.15

The One Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in the divine heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body.

Baha' u'llah

In the moment when we realize that we cannot escape, we know also that this is really where we belong.

Ira Progoff

Heaven abides; earth lasts.
They last and abide
By not living for themselves.
Hence they live forever.

Tao Teh Ching

The basis of the community of the Spirit is truth; the basis of the human community of spirit is desire.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

I have always complained that my work was constantly interrupted, until I slowly discovered that my interruptions were my work.

Anonymous

An Interview with Reb Anderson

PAUL WALSH

In August of 1986, Paul Walsh, president of Fellowship In Prayer, interviewed Tenshin Reb Anderson, abbot of the San Francisco Zen Center. As leader of one of America's three largest Zen Centers, Reb Anderson oversees the practice of Zen at three separate locations: the City Center, at 300 Page Street in San Francisco; Green Gulch Farm, adjoining Muir Beach in Marin County; and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, a monastery deep in the wilderness area near Carmel Valley, where intensive meditation over a period of three years or more is the norm for a serious student. An edited version of the interview appears below.

PW: Tell us something about how you first became interested in Zen.

RA: Well, one thing is that the longer I practice Zen Buddhism, the further back the beginning of the practice seems to start. I keep moving backwards in time. The more my practice moves forward into the future the farther it moves back into the past. So its hard to say exactly when I began. I could say that in 1967 I came to Tassajara and that in 1968 I became a member of Zen Center. I can say those kinds of things but then even before I came I was already being turned towards this ineffable Dharma—so its hard to know where to begin.

PW: Are you a native Californian?

RA: I was born in Mississippi, that's where I get the name Reb.

PW: How old were you when you came to Tassajara?

RA: I had just turned 24.

PW: And you've been with Zen Center in one capacity or another ever since?

RA: Right.

PW: You grew up in Minnesota.

RA: Yes. A lot of people from Minnesota come to Zen Center to practice. It's something about the cold winters that often put you in a situation where you wind up facing yourself.

PW: There isn't much Zen in Mediterranean countries, is there?

RA: So far, anyway, the Italians, Spaniards, and the Greeks have not been our main cultural or ethnic background for our students. Our students are more often Jewish and Wasps.

PW: Why do you suppose so many Jews are interested in Zen?

RA: Because Jews are religious people. And if they don't get involved

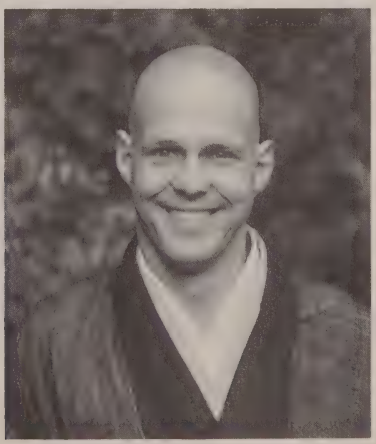
in Judaism, they usually look for something else. A lot of them are disaffected from their own religion right now, so there are millions of Jews in America looking for some meaningful learning, some religious learning they can do. There's not much to object to in just sitting. The Jews like Zen because both religions are gutsy.

PW: You talked yesterday about the kinds of outreach that you saw as possibilities down the road.

RA: Well, I think I want to say that I'm not actually so much concerned with Zen Center offering a hospice, or a daycare center, or giving a gardener's training course for prisoners, or something like that. It's not that I'm not interested in those particular things so much as it is that I'm interested in clarifying the practice and teaching of Zen Center. I feel that when that's clear—and even when it's not clear—people will come and ask us to do things, or ask us to join with them in doing things. Sometimes they ask us to do it for them. But we usually say, "Why don't you do it and we'll help you." I would like people to use Zen Center as a kind of inspiration for various kinds of outreach. I myself don't have some outreach thing that I want to do. The fundamental purpose of Zen Center is to clarify the teaching and the practice.

PW: When you say "clarify the teaching and practice," what do you mean by clarify?

RA: I mean make it clearer to all of us here at Zen Center and throughout the world, if possible.



PW: I think a lot of people have the notion that Buddhism is a quest for personal salvation, that Buddhists are not interested in what goes on in the world. But certainly, the Bodhisattva ideal, if understood, would indicate that you go back into the world and have some impact on it in a positive way.

RA: That's an example of clarifying the teaching. Some people might come here and think that Buddhism was just for yourself. And if they had that belief, they wouldn't understand the teaching. But, gradually it becomes clear that Buddhism works to help others, that you can't help yourself directly. The only way you can help yourself is by helping others. When that becomes clear, we can become involved in all kinds of activities. And we will understand that really they are all based on the same thing.

PW: So, if you were interested in issues of peace, for example, you'd have to begin by coming to be at peace with yourself, before you could project that effectively in an activity. You wouldn't necessarily have to go out and join committees or march on Washington. You could have an effect just by being a peaceful person.

RA: That's right. People might come to you and say, "Would you help us do a daycare center?" And you might say "yes" or you might say "no." But the point is you would help them in whatever way you thought was appropriate. Maybe you would go and help them build the building.

PW: As a result of your understanding and your practice, you would be more apt to do that.

RA: No, you don't know what you would do. You might help them; you might not. You might feel that the best way to help them is for them not to lift a finger.

PW: But you would be mindful of the notion of helping them.

RA: You might not be mindful of that idea. You might actually just help them without any idea of helping them.

PW: Well, that would be the ideal, wouldn't it.

RA: That is the ideal. Even though you vow to help people, you're not thinking all the time, "I'm helping this person." It's a nice thing to say. If you think when you meet people: "I love this person," "I love this person," "I love this person," it changes the way you see them. But I don't recommend, necessarily, that you say that all the time. It doesn't work after awhile. It just floods things. It's nice to do it for awhile, because then you can see, depending on what you're saying to yourself, how it affects the way you see things. But rather than say to myself "I love you," or "I

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hate you" when I'm looking at you, if I can say nothing about you, I think that's best. I think that's really helpful to both of us. If I can actually say nothing about you, or, better yet, realize that when I look at you I actually see myself, that's pretty helpful. But that's hard to remember: that I see myself reflected through you. That's hard to remember. But to return to your question about our plans. People are asking us to do things, and some things may happen. It's like a man holding onto a tree: this is the union of environment and mind. The merging of knowledge and principle. That's what I think Zen Center's job is: to be that way. This is great calmness and wisdom in Zen, and people will come here if we practice that way. When the gold has hammer and anvil, then the refinement of the gold depends on one's self. So it depends on the relationship and what each individual wants to do. You can't say exactly what will happen. People come with many desires and big hearts. They see this as a place where their heart could flourish. Or where their work, their heart-work, could flourish. Something like that. Again, if the teaching isn't clear the people won't be able to stand the variety of social activities; they'll be distracted. . . . We all have to really clarify our practice. Then we can deal with multiplicity and great social variety.

PW: When you say clarify the practice, what actually is involved in that? What do you offer people who don't know too much about Zen practice? How do you go about clarifying the practice?

RA: Through classes, through sitting meditation, through ceremonies. Through work, through the way we work, through normal social interactions, through language, mainly through language, in a way.

PW: How many people are exposed to some taste of Zen through the San Francisco Zen Center's three locations in the course of a year?

RA: At Tassajara in the summer, probably 2000 or so guests come. And many of them take instruction in meditation. All of them feel something of the monastery while they're there. The food is vegetarian. There are 50 or 60 people who get up in the morning and practice meditation, even if they don't go to the formal meditation instruction while they're there. The guests feel the effects of practice. And then at the farm, Green Gulch Farm, which is also called Green Dragon Temple or Green Dragon Zen Temple, on Sundays, usually two or three hundred people come.

PW: What happens on Sunday?

RA: They do a variety of things. Some come and help and take care of the Sunday event, which involves cooking a big lunch for the guests. Or they help selling bakery products and pastries. Some people outside of

the community come in and help bake bread to be sold to the guests. We offer work as a way for people to come and practice here. They donate their work and their efforts, and at the same time they learn. Then also, Sunday morning, there is beginner's instruction in Zen meditation, which is called Zazen. And there's sometimes a class on Sunday morning. And then at ten o'clock or so there's a lecture. And after lecture, there's a sort of social tea, followed by a question and answer period.

PW: What would a typical lecture be?

RA: Well, last week I told a story of a man, one of our members, actually, who just last week saved the life of a friend in the streets of San Francisco. In the process, however, he got his kneecap broken. So I told the story of his excellent practice. And then I talked about a quote from a koan by Dogen-zenji—the founder of the Soto branch of Zen—which is this: When the Dharma, the truth or the law, does not yet fill your body and mind, you think it's already sufficient. But when the Dharma completely fills your body and mind, you think there's something lacking. I talked about that in relationship to the precepts.

PW: So, over the course of a year a sizable number of people are exposed to some Zen teaching.

RA: Yes, plus they make a lot of friends here. And in the city Zen Center. Also, on Saturdays, we have an event like the one in Green Gulch. We have a similar one in San Francisco on Saturday. But not quite as many people come to that one. Green Gulch is more popular. A lot of guests participate in Zazen. Sometimes we have a formal tea. That's another way of getting involved. And then another way is our publication, our restaurant, our bakery.

PW: I think almost anyone in the East who is interested in cooking knows the Tassajara cookbooks. To move to another kind of question, how do you see the relationship between Buddhism and the Western religions? Does one have to give up one's Christian beliefs or practices to become a Zen person?

RA: You probably do have to give up your Christian or Jewish beliefs, or whatever kind of beliefs, in order to practice Zen. But you also have to give up your beliefs in Zen in order to practice Zen. You have to give up all your ideas, concepts, and beliefs. Give them up means realize there's nothing to them. So Buddhism is not like one of the religions in the world.

PW: It's not really a religion.

RA: It is, actually, each one of the religions, when you go beyond them.

The religion people call Buddhism, is not really Zen Buddhism, or true Buddhism. Actual Buddhism is to go beyond Buddhism, to go beyond Christianity, to go beyond Judaism, to go beyond Islam. But not to skip over them. You have to go through them. You can't just jump beyond Buddhism without going through Buddhism. But if when you jump be-

yond Buddhism, or you jump beyond Christianity, or you jump beyond Judaism, or you jump beyond Islam, then you're in what we call Buddhism. Which is not Buddhism, is not Christianity, not Islam; it's . . . you can't say what it is. But it goes through the world, without checking out the fact that the world is there.

PW: That's a very good statement. I think a lot of people believe that one becomes interested in Buddhism as a result of being alienated from Judaism or Christianity.

RA: It's the people who really want Christianity to work who turn to Buddhism. The best Christians are interested in Buddhism. I don't mean the best—I mean the ones who really want Christianity to be alive.

PW: Is there the possibility of such a thing as Zen without Buddhism?

RA: Yes, there is. Zen without Buddhism is possible. Because Zen, just strictly speaking, means concentration. Without enlightenment, without awakening. Zen Buddhism means awakened meditation or the meditation of Buddha or the meditation or the concentration of an awakened one. That's one way to translate it. Because Zen just means concentration or imperturbability or something like that. It comes from the Sanskrit word dhyana. So strictly speaking you could say that there could be just dhyana. There is such a practice as dhyana by itself, and some people are very concentrated, but do not practice awakening simultaneously. It's not unusual to see concentration operating somewhat out of tune with the ethical precepts of Buddhist conduct or wisdom. Concentrated people are not always ethically alert and alert to reality at the same time. However, concentrated people often wake up and see the importance of ethics and start to practice them. So there's a kind of back and forth between these different branches of the practice. Sometimes people get stuck in one phase of it for a long time. They get hung-up on ethics and they don't practice enough concentration. So their ethical practice suffers or they practice concentration but without ethics, and then the concentration practice suffers. As soon as you overemphasize one of the branches, it just starts to deteriorate. So, in other words, it's possible to have Zen by itself. That would be an overemphasis on the meditation.

Buddhism involves Zen. In order to understand Buddhism you must concentrate on what's happening. So Zen is necessary for Buddhism, but Buddhism's not necessary for Zen, unless you want it to be awakened meditation. Something like that.

PW: Which aspect of Zen seems to interest your new students the most?

RA: Today, I think people are getting interested in Zen Buddhism sometimes more through the teachings of wisdom. Or the teachings about the attitude, rather than directly through the meditation. Although people are still getting involved through meditation.

PW: Do you emphasize here getting the actual experience of enlightenment?

RA: We try to give it away. It's more important to get rid of it than to get it. There are certain members of our ancestry that think of themselves as beggars when they are going for the enlightenment experience, or kensho. So, although it seems to be a big encouragement when it happens, to try to get it has certain philosophical problems.

PW: At the last intensive Zen retreat I attended, everybody was driving to attain kensho before the week was out. It was an effort that particular Zen Center encouraged. Of course, that's not so true of the Soto Zen sect, and it seems generally to be less emphasized today in America.

RA: The danger in the Soto sect is that the monks or the meditators might become complacent. And the danger in trying to get kensho is right there. It's sort of putting emphasis on penetration rather than on daily life. And so it has a certain bias. It's difficult, because almost any way you practice is liable to bias one towards complacency and the other towards anxiety.

PW: Do you use koan study?

RA: Yes, considerably. But in Soto Zen usually not in a systematic way. You know, with certain right answers, predescribed answers. No. It's more from the point of view of how all koans arise, from "how is this a manifestation of reality?"

PW: Do you use traditional koans like "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" or make up contemporary ones?

RA: Both. That happens spontaneously. For example, right now: How is this perfect? This is perfect, right? But that's sort of a problem. So it's a koan, right now. We are Buddha, but at the same time, it's kind of a problem that we are. That this is perfect awakening. How is that so?

But that makes sense according to what the founder of the Soto Zen Sect, Dogen, said, that the Dharma does fill you. If you really do feel the Dharma filling you, at the same time you feel something missing. So that's the dynamic of our life.

PW: It is indeed.

Seeing Eye to Eye

CHRISTOPHER A. ZIMMER

This past fall Fellowship In Prayer inaugurated an annual awards program named for the Fellowship's co-founder, Kathryn G. Brown. Princeton University students were invited to submit essays on the topic, "What my Religious Faith and Practice Mean to me," and two students tied for first place. Their equally outstanding essays are being published in alphabetical order according to their last names, Shimon Anisfeld's in the June edition of "F.I.P.," Christopher Zimmer's in this issue.

Presenting the awards, Fellowship In Prayer President Paul Walsh said that "Shimon Anisfeld and Christopher Zimmer's concern with the life of the spirit, their willingness to devote time and energy to the difficult problems of faith and practice, and their evident commitment to making their beliefs an active part of their lives, are deeply encouraging at a time when deceit, corruption, and greed command so many of the headlines. These essays have set a very high standard that next year's contestants will be hard pressed to equal.

The awards program was begun at Princeton because of the University's proximity to our headquarters, but it will be extended next fall to other colleges and universities.

He *better* not say that word. If he even thinks about using that word, I just might . . . Seconds pass . . . He won't say it. He can't. No . . . Well, for crying out loud, he said it. He just couldn't avoid it. He had to call us adolescents! I close my eyes for a moment. For as long as I can remember, the word "adolescent" has conjured up the image of a gigantic neon "Look!" sign, complete with eyeballs aimed directly at me, and underneath, in flashing lights, the words: "This kid is in *BIG* trouble!" Today is the first day of my ninth grade year, and as I sit in a hot gymnasium listening to our headmaster reflect on how "adolescents are naturally inclined to wander astray," I feel those big old eyeballs looking right at me. Yes, I knew it was true. I was in big trouble. I was an adolescent.

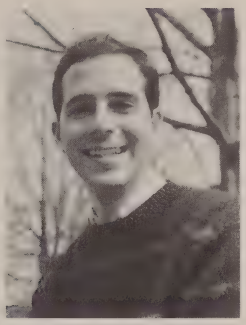
Christopher Zimmer is a junior majoring in biology at Princeton University and planning to go to medical school. He has a special interest in the neurophysiological basis of behavior and finds time to volunteer as a counselor at the Mercer County Corrections Center and as a tutor at an urban development project in Trenton, New Jersey.

It was sometime during the height of my neon light period that I began to think seriously about God. Up until then, I never really considered who God might actually be. Before each lunch in kindergarten, we solemnly chanted, "God is gray-shus; God is good, and we thank Him for this food. Ahh-men." What did "gray-shus" mean, anyway? At home, my mother was always thanking God for this thing or that, and my father was always ordering God to damn this thing or that. But still, in spite of hearing the word "god" over and over again, I never thought about who or what God was. I certainly never thought to ask anyone. After all, God might damn me. Thank God I wasn't damned.

And so, it was amidst these rather Wizard of Oz-like images of God that I, at the seasoned age of thirteen, logically wondered if those big eyeballs that appeared everytime I was called an adolescent might belong to God. I was certain that God was scrupulously recording everything I did wrong, and, being an adolescent, I was sure that I was "wandering astray" enough times to make God wonder if it was even worth keeping track. Knowing that God was frowning on much of what I did made me feel angry with myself. So I would pray. When I felt that I wasn't studying hard enough, I would pray, "Lord, make me study harder." When I didn't get an "A" on a test, I would pray, "Lord, please give me an 'A' on the next test." When I felt that the entire world hated me, I would pray, "Lord, get me out of here."

At the time, I never connected the guilt that surrounded me as an adolescent with my everpresent fear of being judged by God. The guilt was hidden. It manifested itself as an overall awkwardness and dissatisfaction that I came to regard as permanent features of my life. What I now label as guilt, therefore, felt more like a subtle gnawing away of my self-esteem, and it was this "self-dislike" that caused me to fear God's opinion of me as a person. Thus, though they were two separate elements of my life, the guilt that I felt as an adolescent and my ongoing fear of God shared a common origin: my vision of who God was. God was something like a bank: if I did something good, He owed me interest; if I did something wrong, He deducted a penalty. It was quite a change from the Wizard of Oz days.

In retrospect, the experience which brought an end to this horrible cycle of guilt and unhappiness was rather anticlimactic. I wish that I could write about a pyrotechnic spectacle in which God was revealed to me in Old Testament proportions; instead, I carry with me the experience of a



much more subtle revelation. It happened a little later in my ninth grade year.

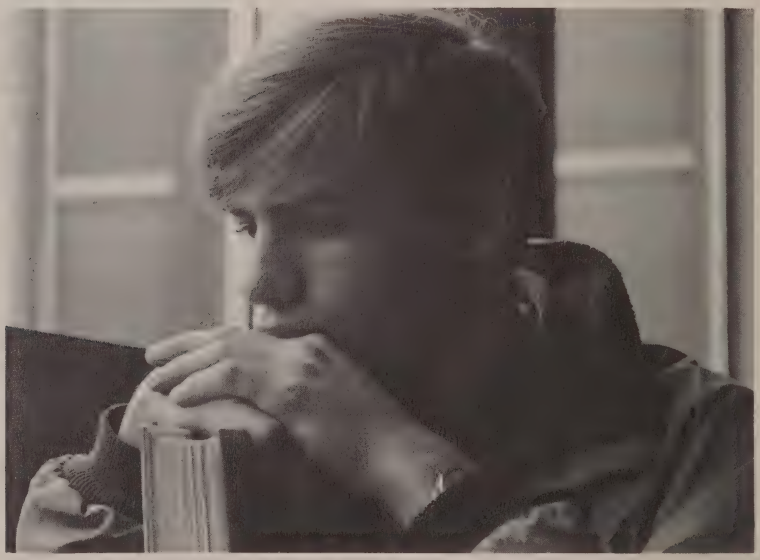
It is the late afternoon, and I am attending an after-school study hall for students whose parents work. I am nervously studying for a test the next day in my honors physical science course. Sitting across from me is the young teacher who proctors the study hall each afternoon. From past conversations, I know that his spirituality and faith are important parts of his life. Feeling frustrated with myself, I look up and jokingly ask, "Mr. Atwood, will you pray that I get an 'A' on this test?" Not really expecting a response, I look back down at my book. A couple of seconds later, Mr. Atwood says quietly, "No, but I *will* pray that you do your best." I look back up, and I think to myself, "What in the world does that mean? Why can't you just pray that God will give me an 'A'?" My thoughts never become words, though. Somehow, the gentle but serious look in Mr. Atwood's eyes keep me from speaking. I believe that he really will pray for me.

That was it. As strange as it may seem, those few words: "I will pray that you do your best," were all I needed to start wondering if God was really as angry with me as I thought. As I began the long process of wrestling with my image of God, I became very sensitive to the ways other people related to God. It was my impression that those who perceived God as I did, that is, as constantly being disappointed and angry with our actions, lived in a perpetual fear of what God might do to them. The closer I looked, the more I realized how unhappy, unsatisfied, and unfulfilled these people were. And I became worried. I was worried because I knew that I desperately needed something to hold on to, and I wanted that something to be God. But I was scared out of my mind that my life

would forever be guided by guilt and fear if I allowed myself to continue thinking of God as being nothing but eyeballs.

In Mr. Atwood's statement, though, I saw a new vision of God. There was a God who wanted to help me if I knew how to ask for help, and a God who would let me feel that doing my best was all that was needed. Could this really be true? I wondered. Then, just as I had done before, I began to look closely at the kind of life that people like Mr. Atwood pursued. I was astonished. I had never before realized how completely satisfied a person could be by dedicating one's life to serving other people. As a teacher, Mr. Atwood earned just enough money to keep himself afloat, but in my eyes, he began to seem like the richest person alive. I knew what I wanted.

I wanted to be close to God. I wanted to love God; I wanted to feel that God loved me. I began to think about God a lot. On these occasions, however, I didn't see any eyeballs; in fact, I began to separate God from



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any physical image. Instead, God became more of a presence that I sensed as being a part of me wherever I went. My prayers began to take the form of conversations with God. I no longer asked God to give me anything; instead, I prayed that God would let me share strength and courage to do, as Mr. Atwood had said, my very best. I prayed that I would be helped to become a better person by being sensitive to the needs of those around me and by sharing God's love, in quiet and meaningful ways, with those whom I wanted to help. I began to integrate my faith in God in most everything I thought about or did. But wait! I wasn't perfect! I still made, and continue to make, many, many mistakes. I know that there are still times when my actions cause other people pain and unhappiness. I know that there are times when I am downright selfish. I know that there are times when I am an adolescent.

My vision of God has changed a lot since the days when calling myself an "adolescent" would have doomed me to a neon hell. I do not think that God is keeping track of my mistakes, as numerous as they may be. I now pray that God will allow me the presence of mind to see my mistakes for what they are: mistakes. When I do something wrong, I no longer fear that God will penalize my account. I simply pray that God will help me to see where I have erred, that I will be helped to right the wrong as best as possible and to use the experience to learn something about myself.

Expressing my love for God is one of the hardest things for me to do. Attempting to convey a sense of the nourishment that I get from that love is equally as difficult. The problem is that there are so many "word resistant" feelings that go along with what I have written. There is one feeling that I do not want to leave hidden between the lines of this essay. It is the feeling of completeness that my faith in God has given me. I know that if I always keep that faith, God will always be with me. I can never again be in big trouble.

A Zen Approach to Stress

IRA PROGOFF

One of the spiritual giants of the twentieth century retells a classical Japanese tale. A Zen master confronts "anxiety great enough to bring about failure" in a man with "large talents and capacities for success." The master offers a simple solution that brings about a dramatic change, inviting the reader to apply the same solution to the issues in his or her life.

The hero of the story is a wrestler, Great Waves by name. He was a man of tremendous physical strength and he was also of great competence in the art of wrestling. He was able to defeat anyone as long as the bout they were engaged in was private and informal. Then no one could beat him. But if it was a formal match before an audience, the weakest wrestler could defeat him. Great Waves became anxious when he was before an audience when the match became a formal test of his powers. At such times his great competence left him, and all his years of practice seemed to have been in vain.

The setting of this story is Medieval Japan, but it represents a psychological situation that is quite common in our culture as well. We have all heard of professional persons, attorneys for example, who are brilliant in law school but who fade when they must face a judge and jury in a crowded courtroom, or who lose command of their knowledge when they are called upon to use it in disputes or negotiations. Their capacities are excellent, but they become weak when the time for testing comes. In our psychological era, people would be quick to point out to such an attorney that he is suffering from a psychological disability. He would be given a descriptive diagnosis, depending on the concepts of the school of thought that was diagnosing him, and he would be referred to a psychotherapist for treatment.

Living not in modern America but in the culture of Medieval Japan, the wrestler also realized that he had a problem that required the assistance of another person. In the concept of his culture, he went to a Zen

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Paul M. Schrock

master and there he received a quality of help that is of great significance for modern psychology.

The master first asked Great Waves to tell him his name. Being told, he advised him to enter the temple and remain there in meditation throughout the night. He instructed Great Waves to work and wait until he would become quiet within, and then to call upon an image by which his name would be represented. He was to hold this image firmly and to permit it to extend itself as it wished. He was to encourage it and draw it forth to the fullness of its own nature. He was to let the great waves come and increase, and he was to enter into the waves and become one of them. When he and the waves were one, his problem would be solved.

The wrestler followed the master's advice. He entered the temple and found a private place where he could be silent and meditate. He sat in silence and tried to quiet his mind, but thoughts of many kinds came to him. Thoughts of his wrestling and thoughts of his friends and his problems and his fears came to him and he could not be quiet. He remained in silence, however, until eventually in a condition of psychic fatigue, his thoughts subsided and he did become still.

When he became quiet inwardly he was able to think about his name, and with it, the present situation of his life. As he thought of it the image representing it came before his mind's eye. Now he saw waves rising and falling in the sea, great waves reaching tremendous heights, breaking with great strength and dissipating in the sea. He remained in meditation and encouraged the waves to roll on, to rise and fall, to enlarge themselves, to break and disappear, to follow the impulse of their nature with perfect freedom. As they did so, they absorbed an ever larger part of his field of consciousness. The waves rising and falling, became the sea, and as the night progressed a mighty ocean was moving back and forth before him and around him.

As the wrestler remained in concentration upon the image of the ocean and as he permitted it to move according to its own nature, it grew larger and larger. It became the reality of the temple in which he was. The waves moved on and on. They swelled and rose and fell again. They washed away the decorations in the temple. The flower vases disappeared in the flood of the sea. The figures used for religious devotions were washed away by the waves. The holy statues were inundated and washed away. Even the figure of Buddha was engulfed by the waves and disappeared. Nothing remained in the temple. Only the mighty ocean rising and falling, and surging onwards in its cycles was present. This was the sole real-

ity. The temple itself disappeared. There was only the ocean, and the wrestler himself was the ocean. He was no longer the person who called himself by the name of Great Waves. Only the ocean itself was present. The ocean was all, and there were individual waves rising and falling upon that ocean.

In the morning the Zen Master returned to the room in the temple where he had left the wrestler in meditation. He observed him for a moment and then patted him on the shoulder. "Nothing can disturb you now," he told him. "You are the waves. Go forth then and wash all that is before you."

The end of the story is a happy one. It is a story of success. The anxious wrestler, the story concludes, did go forth and was no longer fearful. He became the greatest wrestler in all Japan.

There have been several attempts in recent years to present Zen Buddhism to the West as a new kind of religious philosophy. This story, however, indicates its psychological implications quite specifically. Here the Zen person is coming with a problem and with a purpose to which the modern West has become accustomed in the terms of psychotherapy. It brings into sharp relief the principles which give Zen a dynamic therapeutic effect within its own culture. The Zen master was here facing the problem of an anxiety great enough to bring about failure even though the talents and capacities for success were very large. In our time we see that as a psychological problem to be analyzed and diagnosed. But how did the Zen master approach it? He did not attempt to identify the so-called causes of anxiety. He did not inquire into the problems of childhood, nor did he make a diagnosis that would link the persona to the problems. The story indicates nothing of this. It mentions merely that Great Waves described his difficulty to the master, and there is the implication that they discussed it in sufficient detail to make the problem clear.

The master did not ask him how the problem had come into being. He did not ask him about resentments toward his mother or his father; nor did he ask him to meditate on his rivalries with his brothers and sisters. In fact, he drew the focus of attention away from the outer conditions of life and also away from the terms in which Great Waves was perceiving his problem. He drew the attention away from the wrestler's consciousness of his difficulty and redirected it toward another level of the psyche.

At this other *place* in the psyche, a *deeper* place in the sense that it was *below* or more basic than the surface of Great Waves' self-consciousness, the pressures of the problem were not felt. A totally different quality of

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Sackler Collections, Purchase, The Sackler Fund, 1965

experience now entered the situation. It was actually that a new atmosphere was established within the person, encompassing the situation as a whole and setting a new tone for it. This was accomplished by shifting the attention to a different level, enabling the person to reach a different *place in* the psyche. At this depth in psychic space, the situation of the wrestler's life could be seen in a new light, with a new quality of consciousness. The nature of the problem was thus redefined in the eyes of the wrestler himself.

Once the attention had been shifted to the depth level of the psyche, the redefinition of the problem took place spontaneously without any words being spoken. The reason that it could happen without verbal interpretation is that it was a change of place and of perspective that was being brought about. The change in consciousness that was taking place was not a matter of intellectual concepts but of experience. The change in the tone of awareness was actually happening. It was being brought about in the wrestler even though the Zen master did not specifically speak of it. The wrestler was merely given something specific to do—to conceive the present situation of his life, first in thought, and then to let it take the form of images. As the images would enlarge themselves and become symbols the wrestler was to continue with them, letting the symbols serve as vehicles to take him further. By means of the symbols, he would reach a new perspective, a new quality of awareness with which to see the world and his life within it. This new state of consciousness would come about naturally as though by itself and not by self-conscious direction. Specifically it came about through the activities in which the wrestler was engaged on the level of symbolism in his work of meditation.

The essence of the change taking place was a new perspective experienced by the wrestler as he struggled with the question of his life by means of symbols. This perspective was possible in part because the shift in the focus of attention placed him a distance apart psychologically from the environmental sphere of his trouble. He was experiencing his problem of self-consciousness on the surface level of his psyche where the personality touches the outer world. The shifting inward of his attention drew him out of the vortex of the eternal storm and enabled him to look at it from a vantage point in the inward space of the psyche. He had been drawn downward and inward to get a perspective of distance from the problems on the outer level of his life.

Miracle on the Farm

CHARLOTTE CARPENTER

Like a medieval mystery play, this story testifies to the power of experiences that we call "miracles." The event must not be looked at with scientific categories, but in terms of its impact on the subject. In this case, the subject grew in faith and in love, which motivated her to share the story with you.

Early one morning last August we got up to a dark and ominous sky. As mid-American farmers for many years, we knew a bad storm was brewing. Before I was hardly awake, golf-ball sized hail was falling and clattering like we had never heard before. My husband was at the door looking out and calling for me to come see it.

I had no desire to see this destructive storm, my thoughts were out in the fields where beautiful crops of milo, corn, beans, and hay were growing. Large ears of corn almost mature, milo heads turning color, beans hanging full of pods had farmers anticipating a much-needed, bumper crop.

All summer I had enjoyed early morning walks in the lane with tall corn stalks on one side and milo flourishing on the other. It looked so good I thanked God each day for the beauty of it. I saw it grow from tiny seedlings to knee-high, then to tall stalks which almost made the lane a tunnel of green.

All I could do was fall to my knees at my bedside and implore the giver of all good gifts to spare this crop for all of the farmers who worked hard to plant and cultivate it and were so dependent on it. I prayed so intensely that I did not hear the awful clatter of the hail as it dented shingles, siding, metal roofs and broke windows. I had a strong feeling that many more in our vicinity were praying just as I was, later several told me this was true.

When I arose the hail had stopped. Later, when the whole story could be told, we learned that the hail had lasted from 5 to 15 minutes in various places. When we inspected our fields we found little, if any damage

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to crops. A few bruised corn ears, a little milo shattered and that was all. Our crop was still intact and never looked more beautiful although hail storms can completely wipe out a crop so that there is only barren ground left.

Later, when the repair work began, nearly every building had to be re-shingled, siding, windows and screens replaced. In our forty years of farming we had never seen so much repair work done.

It was a miracle. It was the answer to many prayers to the God who said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you and you will glorify me." That's what we did and I am writing this so that many more of you will glorify God, also.

Tom Dunham

The Buddha on Family Ties

KOLDONGA SODNOM

Buddha attached the highest importance to the relationships inside the family, especially to the relation between children and parents. He elucidated this point with a short parable about a son.

A son recognized the good his parents did for him. They bore him and reared him to adulthood, feeding, dressing, and caring for him. He decided to repay them for their goodwill. He put his mother on one shoulder and his father on another shoulder and carried them around for one hundred years, taking them wherever they wanted to go. He bought them the food and drink they wished to have. He strove to please them in every way he could. After this hundred years his parents died, and he also died. He was on his way to the ruler of the Underworld, and thought because he had not committed any offensive deeds, but only good ones, there should be amassed on his account a lot of merits, and he would therefore be sent at once to the Upper World. He arrived in front of the mighty ruler of the Underworld, Yamandaga, who asked him, "What good did you do in your lifetime?" He answered that he had tried to repay his parents for the good that they had done for him by rearing him. Yamandaga said, "Let us see." With these words he put on one side all the deeds the son had done for his parents and on another side all the deeds his parents had done for him. Comparison revealed that all the son's deeds did not repay the good his mother had done for him in a single night. When he cried, she woke up, came to him, changed his diapers, wrapped him in dry clothes, fed him, sated him, and put him back to sleep. With this parable Buddha taught how great is the value of a mother's services for her children.

I would like to add to this story an experience I witnessed here in America. It happened in a plant where I was employed. There was a certain young fellow, a teenager, who had married against the expressed wishes of his parents and rejected them. Years later, he fell ill with pneumonia, and was rushed to a hospital where doctors worked over him long hours to save his life. His parents were informed that he was in a grave situation with doubtful outcome. You know who it was who rushed

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heedlessly at top speed through the night to his bedside: his mother. She forgot all the heartaches, all the disappointments, all the tears she had shed because of him and rushed to his side. She ran from one doctor to another begging them to do all they could to save her son. She pleaded with the nurses to watch over her son. She stood hours at a time alone in the hospital, silently praying to God to heal her son. She forgot about food, rest and sleep, but like a hawk she circled the hospital inside and outside for three days until the crisis was over.

Here is the unrecognized mother, rarely thanked, often forgotten. This is the mother who selflessly fights for her children, a woman with a loving heart. Buddha acknowledged her services and advised all children to pay attention to their parents and to try to live in harmony with them.

Eileen Hohmuth

Exploring Relational Prayer

WILLIAM J. CONNOLLY, S.J.

Here is a fascinating "case study" that demonstrates the power of prayer to change a life. The author describes the actual case of "Fred," a man whose feelings of resentment were replaced by "moments of delight and lightheartedness" when he began to pray.

The increased interest in personal prayer in the last few years has occasioned a steady stream of books, articles, talks, and retreats on the topic. These discussions of prayer have helped us to understand it better and have strengthened our desire to pray. Yet they have often been too abstract or general to enable us to reflect on what actually happens when we ourselves pray or to recognize choices we can make when we want to develop further our way of relating to God in prayer.

In this article I will try to shorten the distance between discussion and experience of relational prayer by presenting a fictional person, Fred, and by describing what happened on several occasions when he prayed. The description, though fictional, is based on an actual experience . . .

The aim of the article is to try to help its readers to use Fred's experience as a basis for reflecting on their own . . .

Fred is a 50-year-old priest and a member of a small religious congregation that specializes in high school education. He has been engaged in high school teaching since shortly after he was ordained, and for the last three years he has been the principal of one of his congregation's better schools. During those three years the school has progressed in both reputation and enrollment. Fred is aware of his share in this achievement and is proud of it. He is also proud of being a fair-minded administrator who deals evenly and openly with both faculty and students.

A difficulty, however, has recently appeared in his relationship with the faculty. A middle-aged priest who had taught in the school for ten years was transferred at the end of the last school year at Fred's request. The priest accepted the change reluctantly but calmly. The faculty, however, were disturbed by the incident. One of those most disturbed was Mark, a priest who has been a friend of Fred's for a long time. Fred has just

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heard Mark has been describing the decision as highhanded and arbitrary.

These accusations have irked Fred. Even more upsetting, however, has been his realization that his relationship with Mark has become formal and distant. He also realizes that the accusations have affected his attitude toward the whole faculty as well as his relationship with Mark. He spends less time than usual talking with faculty members. Fred has attempted to discuss the matter with Mark, but the conversations have been superficial and inconclusive.

An Experience in Prayer

One Saturday afternoon Fred decides to pray. He finds however, that his resentment prevents him from addressing God for more than a few minutes at a time. Then he does something that he does not recall having done before. He asks himself whether there is anything around him that reminds him of God. He decides on the sky. Looking at the sky he asks God to come to him. The resentment toward Mark continues to intrude, but when it does, Fred tries to prescind from it and continues to concentrate on the sky. He asks God to be with him and speak to him in whatever way he chooses. Gradually the blue, the depth, and the peace of the sky begin to hold his attention, and he feels his attention being drawn deeper, then thousands of miles deep, into the sky. A few minutes later he begins to feel that his attention is being drawn even beyond the sky. His absorption gradually intensifies. It becomes easier for him to dismiss the recurring resentment.

At the end of a half hour Fred does not want to stop praying but realizes he has to. He has an appointment in 15 minutes. A thought occurs to him: "I've asked and I've received. But I haven't told God how I feel about what has happened." He reflects, then realizes that he isn't fully aware of what he feels, but that he does have feelings about the experience. Hesitantly, he says to God what he is surest about. He says: "I feel more satisfied than I did when I began to pray." He then becomes aware that he also feels happier and says: "I feel happier than I did when I started." He then realizes that he wants to pray again in the same way, and says so. Although he had not thought of the prayer as incomplete before he expressed his feelings, he now sees it as more complete because he has expressed those feelings . . .

The incident soon has a sequel. After the appointment, as Fred walks back to his room, a memory of Mark drifts across his mind. He remembers how Mark looked when they went trout fishing one day several summers before. He vividly recalls the incongruously jaunty hat Mark was wearing. Fred laughs. Then he realizes that this is the first time he has thought of Mark without resentment for days.

That memory had come spontaneously. It was not the result of consideration. It was not even the result of desire. Fred becomes aware that he feels more light-hearted now than he has since he first heard the accusation. Something significant has happened. He doesn't know exactly what it is, but he wants to give it a chance to occur again. The absorption of the prayer, the feeling of lightheartedness, and the spontaneity that have followed it attract him. Fred is afraid, however, that unless he makes a precise and definite decision, he will not return to what has absorbed him. So he decides to pray like this for several more days.

Prayer on Subsequent Days

The next morning he can give only 20 minutes to prayer. Again he looks at the sky and asks God seriously and intently to speak to him in whatever way he chooses. He finds it quite easy to keep his attention drawn deep into the sky. He becomes even more aware that he is being drawn very deep and very far. The thought occurs to him that he could be content with this for hours. When the time available to him has passed, he again takes a few minutes to tell God how he feels. He has to overcome some inertia to do this. It seems superfluous, but he tells God simply that he is happy that his attention is being drawn so completely to him or at least to something that reminds him of him . . .

On the following day Fred prays again, but later he remembers only that the prayer was satisfying. The next day he prays again. This time he recognizes a heightening awareness of the attractiveness of the One who seems to be drawing him. During the rest of the day he realizes that the periods of light-heartedness are becoming longer and are occurring more often. However, he is also aware that he cannot always prescind from his resentment. But because he is conscious of the light-heartedness, the persistence of the anger does not discourage him. At lunch he meets Mark and they are able to talk at some length to each other, though they restrict themselves to neutral topics.

Next morning, Fred again begins to pray looking at the sky. He be-

comes quickly absorbed but after a few minutes finds that instead of keeping his head raised he has looked down. He also notices that at that moment he has begun to try to work out in his mind how he can resolve the difficulty with Mark. He wonders whether the resentment will continue to plague him. He recognizes at once that he has stopped praying, raises his head, and again asks God to speak to him in whatever way he chooses. The absorption continues.

That day the sky is partly cloudy. A half hour after sunrise, the clouds on the eastern horizon are a deep rose; one patch is clear amber. Fred finds himself delighting in this beauty. He almost forgets to say to God what he feels. He feels more open to God, however, when he has told him how he feels; prayer does not seem complete until he has done so. He tells God how delighted he is at this unexpected beauty . . .

Fred notices during this day that moments of delight continue to occur and that the light-heartedness of the previous day continues. He is even more aware of it. He knows that he cannot yet settle the difficulty with Mark, but on several occasions he realizes that he believes he will soon be able to do that. He is no longer so afraid that his resentment will prevent

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him from being fair to Mark or will keep him aloof from other members of the faculty.

Reflections

Many people find that when they first begin to pay attention to their experience of prayer, questions about the validity of the experience come to mind. But as they continue to pray, these questions lose their urgency. People become more at home with their experience, whatever it is, and cease to be threatened by it. They also seem to be able to recognize the action of God with more assurance . . .

A second reaction that often occurs is difficulty believing that Fred is not following a method. We seem to find it hard to understand that a person can pray without a method. Yet, as Fred remarks, we would not expect people to follow a method when talking to close friends they want to understand and who they hope will understand them.

Attitude toward Feelings

Some of our concern about feelings may be based on a misunderstanding. By feelings we can mean relatively superficial reactions. More important, however, are the deep affective attitudes that most strongly influence and motivate us. The tendency of relational prayer is to encourage persons to bring their deeper, more lasting attitudes into the relationship with God. Relational prayer will encourage people to allow their deeper fears, more persistent angers, profound loving attitudes, and fundamental anxieties into their intimacy with God. It is on this deeper level that the most important things that happen between God and ourselves occur . . .

It is only by expressing feelings (at first relatively superficial ones) that people can come to allow their deeper affective attitudes to enter prayer and continue to operate there. If they let themselves tell God what they feel at the moment, they will at some point begin to express those deeper attitudes and allow themselves to be vulnerable to God's action.

Prayer Happened Gradually

The events that seem most important in Fred's five-day experience of prayer were not decisions he made or things he did, but things that hap-

Paul M. Schrock

pened to him. At the same time, he was very aware that if he had not made some of the choices he did make, his experience would have been significantly different. Second, although Fred's experience was not highly unusual, his willingness to let prayer develop gradually was unusual. Many of us, at least subconsciously, cannot accept gradual development. We want a relationship with God to show itself at once, completely achieved, and are too impatient to engage in the tentative, exploratory way in which Fred came to see what was helpful to him in prayer. Yet it was in this way that Fred let himself develop an assurance that God did want to reach him and that he could let God do just that.

Prayer: What For?

RABBI SAMUEL M. SILVER

It was Abraham Lincoln who said that at a critical juncture in his life he had nowhere to go, so he decided to go to his knees. Whether you lower your knees or your head, when you pray, or whether you cross your hands or cover your eyes, or whether you lift up your hands, prayer can be therapeutic. Its value, however, is diminished if trivialized. The Almighty One is not a bellboy Whom we instruct to do our bidding. The Almighty One cannot be summoned to do our work or carry out our plans. The Almighty One is beyond our easy comprehension. God's vastness can scarcely be understood to mortal, limited minds.

It is futile to think that we can change God through our pleas. We can only strive to be on God's wave length, not get God to alter the orderly processes of nature.

Much of our Scriptural literature is to be taken poetically, not literally. In humanity's infancy it was felt that divine manifestations were to be sought in the disruption of natural phenomena, like making the sea into dry land or stopping the sun in its orbit. But mature religionists point out that the really miraculous in the world is the way nature works normally, as out of the soil comes food, as the planets revolve in the galaxies, as birth is engendered, as the human brain exhibits creativity and the human heart compassion in defiance of the instinctual.

Mature religionists realize that God and humanity are partners, with human beings, of course, the junior partners.

The partnership theme is illustrated by the well-known story of the pastor who visits his farmer parishioner. The two of them stand on a knoll and look out on the panorama of well-manicured fields. Says the pastor: "This is a lovely farm that you and God have here." Replied the farmer: "You should have seen it when God had it to Himself!" We must attune ourselves to God's will, as Jesus said, rather than try to bend Him to our desires.

As a rabbi, I feel keenly the significance of the Hebrew words for prayers. Each one has its own illustrative nuances. One Hebrew word for prayer is *tfila*. It's stem is the verb meaning "self-judgment." In our sup-

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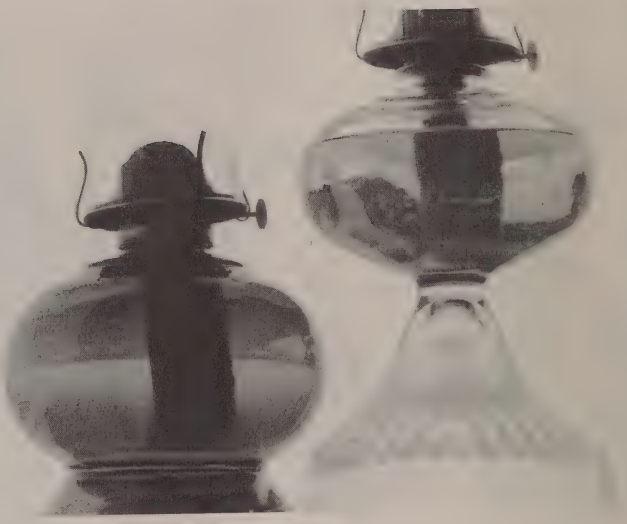
plications to God, we should try hard to look ourselves in the soul and acknowledge our faults and failings. We should admit our weaknesses and tell the Lord that we will try to remedy them. It's not easy. One of my favorite yarns is about the man who said he read so much about the bad results of smoking that he decided to give up reading. The word *tfila* is regarded by some scholars to derive from the verb, "to lower oneself." Humility takes courage. A person all wrapped up in himself makes a small

package. Prayer can drain us of arrogance and make us freshly appreciative of all the favors which God bestows upon us daily.

Some English words for prayer, such as petition and supplication suggest begging, as does the German word, *gebet*, a plea. We are beggars before God. But the chief value of prayer, whether fixed or spontaneous, is the possibility not that we can get God to change, but that the practice of communing with the Almighty One can help us to change for the better. Prayer can make the best in us prevail over the beast in us.



Tom Dunham

My Practice of the Jesus Prayer

MARK BRODY

Here is a firsthand account of the power of prayer. The writer pays attention to breathing when he prays and uses a mantra like a shield to ward off the negative thoughts, feelings, and images that used to inhibit his contact with God.

We welcome your account of your own "Transforming Experience" (an experience related to prayer or meditation that had an outcome for the good of an individual, group, or institution). Please send it (typed, double-spaced, no longer than 750 words) to The Editor, Fellowship In Prayer, 134 Franklin Corner Road, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, 08648, and include a brief biography.

My earthly struggle has involved unwanted thoughts of disease and death and an agonizing discouragement over the violence in the world as manifested by the nuclear arms race and the violence to the environment through pollution. The feelings accompanying these problems were anxiety, excessive tension, depression, and exhaustion from the pattern of fear . . .

Underlying these struggles was a sense of guilt and intolerance associated with my own imperfections while repressing the outrage that I feel when I witness injustices in the world. It seems the self-defeating habit patterns in my mind were fueled by bottled-up emotions.

In 1984 I made a deep and lasting contact with Father Bede Griffiths, a saintly monk and mystic who leads a Christ-centered Yoga community in India. His writings have inspired many people worldwide. Even though I have never been to India to meet him, I have been blessed to receive his care through letters and prayers. It is easy for me to connect with his spiritual presence, which nurtures feelings of harmony and contentment within myself. Father Bede represents a living example of the highest ideals I cherish . . .

In one of his letters he told me of the help he has received through the practice of the Jesus Prayer. As a way of giving me spiritual direction and counseling he explained that the Jesus Prayer is ". . . the simplest method to get beyond one's thoughts and feelings and enter into the presence of

Mark Brody is a practicing psychologist who specializes in "Meditative Therapy." He is married, has two children, and makes his home in Philadelphia.

God," and that ". . . it is only in this experience of transcendence that we can get beyond our conflicts and find the peace which can transform humanity." He continued, ". . . when faced with the battle of life (it is important) to raise one's mind above the conflicts and become aware of the indwelling Spirit in which all conflicts are reconciled."

There is scriptural support for the practice of the Jesus Prayer. St. Paul instructs us to pray without ceasing, Jesus teaches that the Kingdom of Heaven is within, and the plea of a blind man in the Gospel uses wording similar to the Jesus Prayer. We are all blind in some way. The repetition of the prayer must be coordinated with breath and visualization. The breath is an important carrier of the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by Jesus' breathing on His disciples and telling them to receive the Holy Spirit. Using the breath keeps prayer from becoming a superficial mental exercise. By getting the body and mind coordinated together in the affirmation of Jesus' healing presence and mercy, the result is more powerful.

I take a slow, deep breath beginning in my solar plexus which expands the abdominal area first and then the whole chest. During this process I visualize the energy flowing upwards from my heart center and through the point between my eyes on the inhalation. As I affirm the Presence of the Lord flowing into me I repeat inwardly, "Lord Jesus Christ Son of God." Then as I exhale, I affirm the reality of the grace and peace of the Holy Spirit descending and expelling any dis-at-ease as the breath is released. Concentration is downward and out through the solar plexus and finishes with a contraction of the abdominal area. While this is done I inwardly repeat, "Mercy on me a sinner; Lord Jesus Christ have mercy." The relaxation is deepened by having the length of the prayer and exhalation twice as long as the inhalation.

The practice of the Jesus Prayer can also take place in a less intense way throughout the day while we are engaged in our duties. Through this practice, personal neurotic thought patterns begin to lose their hold, and we acquire an attitude of letting go to God's will. Emotions are transformed and constructively asserted, rather than suppressed. We begin to feel accepted by God, and can then more easily accept ourselves, despite our imperfections.

With thankfulness I acknowledge the practice of the Jesus Prayer and the holy man who guides me, Father Bede. My own efforts alone could not have removed my fear and suffering, but through God all things are possible, and life on earth can become a safer journey.

The Grass

STEVE SHELLY

In late summer,
I walk through the field,
Golden with grains of grass,
Each stem holding its seeds
Up into the wind.

There are millions
So small.

We, too, are the grass
Some standing straight, tall, proud,
Nearly perfect,
Holding our seeds to the sun,
So the wind can gather them
For planting.

Some of us are broken,
Stems snapped by storms,
By people walking,
Some born bent and small
By nature.

Some struggling to survive at all,
Waving in the wind,
Just barely growing,
Bearing no seeds at all.
Some just couldn't do it.

Every blade in this field,
No matter how small, barren or broken,
No matter how tall and perfect,
Is respectable and loved,
Just look—you can see it.
Each one is worthy because it lives,
Each one a thing of beauty.
We, too, are the grass.

Steven Shelly is a clinical psychologist practicing in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, and an Associate Professor at Hahnemann University. He is involved in relief work for the people of Haiti.

To Share

This new feature has been suggested to us by Reuben L. Musey, a Member of the Board of Trustees of Fellowship In Prayer who works in Hagerstown Junior College in Hagerstown, Maryland. Mr. Musey writes this:

> Tragic happenings in our society during the final quarter of the twentieth century have threatened the faith and hope of people not moored to the Rock that is God. Never has there been a more desperate need for vital prayer. Individually and collectively, we must turn more than ever to prayer to muster the spiritual resources needed for survival and salvation.
>
> We are in need of a "People's Prayer Network," a person-to-person association for and by people who aspire to pray effectively.

Beginning with this issue of "Fellowship In Prayer," we will publish prayers sent to us by our readers. Please share your prayers with us. Send your favorite prayer or one you have written yourself to The Editor, Fellowship In Prayer, 134 Franklin Corner Road, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, 08648. Our first "prayer to share" comes from Samuel Cooper of Fairhope, Alabama:

> Give us grace and strength to persevere. Give us courage and gaiety and the quiet mind. Spare to us our friends and soften to us our enemies. Give us the strength to encounter that which is to come, that we may be brave in peril, constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath, and in all changes of fortune, and down to the gates of death, loyal and loving to one another.
>
> *Robert Louis Stevenson*

To pray is to open ourselves to God so that God can open us to others.
Louis Evely

In prayer the seeds of concern have a way of appearing. Often enough, a concern begins in a feeling of being personally liable, personally responsible, for some person or event. With it there may come an intimation that one should do some little thing: speak to some person, make an inquiry into a certain situation, write a letter, send some money, send a book. Or it may be a stop in our minds about some pending decision, or a clear directive that now is not the time to rest, or an urge to stay home

Tom Dunham

when we have been meaning to stay away. It may be that no more than this will be given to us. But this seed is given us to follow, and if we do not follow it, we cannot expect to see what may grow from it. Seeds, not fruit, are given in prayer, but they are given for planting.

Douglas V. Steere

PRAYERS FOR OUR DAY
by E. Lee Phillips, 1982, John Knox Press, Atlanta, Georgia, paperback, $7.95.

E. Lee Phillips presents a collection of three prayers for each day that are poetic and lyrical, Christocentric, in the classical tradition, and attuned to the four seasons of the year. "In Spring," the author writes, "every creature . . . wakens. . . . Summer has thoughts of its own: mature, rich, full-orbed . . . and possessed with wisdom. . . . Autumn is alive with coppery colors dancing in the sunlight. . . . Winter spells a magic all its own when new fallen snow blankets earth and tree."

THE POWER OF PRAYER AND THE PRAYER OF POWER
by R. A. Torrey, 1971, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, paperback.

This is a reprint of the 1924 classic handbook on tapping the unlimited power of God through prayer. It asks and answers the questions that confront everyone at one time or another. How to pray? Who can pray? Why pray? What interferes with prayer? How to overcome hindrances to prayer? What can prayer do for a person or a nation?

THE BEST OF E. M. BOUNDS ON PRAYER
by E. M. Bounds, edited by Homer W. Hodge, selected and compiled by Cornelius Zylstra, 1986, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, paperback, $5.95.

This is a selection of the classic instructional and inspirational essays on prayer by one of the most beloved and outstanding 19th-century writers and teachers of the subject. He writes here eloquently of The Essentials of Prayer, The Necessity of Prayer, The Possibilities of Prayer, Power through Prayer, Prayer and Praying Men, Purpose in Prayer, The Reality of Prayer, and The Weapon of Prayer.

Apologies to Liz Socolow for incorrectly printing the title of her poem in our April issue and for the incorrect spelling of Ploughshares.

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